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Thesis

THE MEANING AND VALUE OF ANCESTOR WORSHIP.

Submitted by

Orvia A. Proctor

(A.B. Park College, 1918)

In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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THE MEANING AND VALUE OF ANCESTOR WORSHIP.

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THE MEANING AND VALUE OF ANCESTOR WORSHIP.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION: THE POPULAR RELIGION OF CHINA.

THE MEANING AND VALUE OF ANCESTOR WORSHIP.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION: THE POPULAR RELIGION OF CHINA.

1. Limitation of the subject. The discussion of the broad subject of ancestor worship would take us far afield and far beyond the limits of this paper. It would involve us in the investigation of the practices of the primitives of Australia where ancestor worship fades into totemism. It would lead us into the entrancing study of the unique rites of the African tribes, with their medicine men, deified chiefs, and re-incarnated ancestors. It would draw us into a consideration of the ever-present ghosts in India, and the interesting methods by which the survivors hope to keep them happy and friendly. It would require us to go into the whole matter of Shinto, and the part ancestor worship has played and still plays in Japanese government and society. It would guide us then into a contemplation of the Chinese worship of ancestors, past and present. Having considered all these we should have a formidable volume and still would have left untouched the great field of ancient peoples of our own race among whom ancestor worship prevailed. Fortunately, it is not necessary to make such an extensive study in order to get at the meaning and the elements of permanent value in ancestor worship. Wherever it is found it is based largely on the same fundamental hopes and fears, and expresses itself in slightly different but essentially similar ways. For our present purpose therefore we have chosen to limit our discussion to include only ancestor worship among the Chinese,

where as we shall see, it is the chief feature of the actual religious life of the nation.

2. Background for ancestor worship.

Any study of ancestor worship apart from its setting in the whole religious life of China, however, would be a rather crippled affair. It would be like an explanation of the Prohibition Movement which left Christianity out of account. It would be like a description of a sunset which reckoned only with the setting sun, leaving out of account the feathery clouds which intermingled and became a part of it. Ancestor worship is a part, and an exceedingly vital part, of the whole religious system of China. A brief description of the whole is therefore necessary to an adequate understanding of the part.

3. Complexity of Chinese religion.

Religion in China has usually been considered by historians under three main heads. He finds certain satisfaction in being able to classify and label the various beliefs, observances, and practices that make up the religious life of China. The reader likewise experiences a feeling of completeness, and order, and intense satisfaction, when he finds that everything that has to do with religion has been nicely labelled and put into its rightful place in one or the other of the three groups. Indeed, such is the demand of our logical and scientific minds for regular and orderly arrangement, that we are often willing to obtain them by a sacrifice, or at least a severe stretching, of facts. The closer student of Chinese life, however, cannot fail to be impressed with the fact that such an arrangement, pleasing as it may be to the intellect, is nevertheless unwarranted by the actual facts. What we have in this chapter,

therefore, is not an attempt at orderly arrangement, but rather an endeavor to describe, as realistically as possibly, that complex system of religion and superstition which influences the present condition and future fortune of the Chinese nation. If the study results in a feeling of disorder and discontent, perhaps I shall have succeeded in my effort to convey a true impression of the variegated background against which ancestor worship is to be understood, and into which it merges, becoming an integral part of it.

Straight from his study of the three great systems, Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, the investigator steps into China for first hand information as to the way in which the great principles of the three religions are applied. He is greeted by a series of practices which are quite foreign to the Classical or original teachings of all the systems. Some of them Moore[1] classifies under the head of the State religion, which is an extension of Confucianism. Some of them are vaguely associated with one or the other of the three systems by virtue of having some one identifying element. Most of them are disclaimed by all the systems, and all of them are practiced by most of the people.

4. Buddhistic elements. There are a few distinctly Buddhistic elements in the religion of the masses. The thousands of idols worshipped throughout the land are both Buddhist and Taoist, but the best known and most popular ones are Buddhist. Kwan-yin, the Buddhist Goddess of Mercy, is the most popular and most widely worshipped single divinity in China. She is sought on a great many occasions and by all classes and kinds

1. Moore,G.F.: History of Religion. Chas.Scribner's Sons. N. Y. 1922 Chapter I.

of people. Especially is she sought by the anxious wife, fearful lest her failure to bear a son should bring reproach upon her and alienate her from her husband's affactions. She is besought again by the worried mother in behalf of her fever-ridden child, and again by the greiving husband or wife, for the life of his or her suffering mate. The God of Wealth, and other Buddhist deities, are also widely worshipped.

The Buddhist emphasis upon vegetarianism is everywhere in evidence, especially among the women. The custom prevails in some sections of allowing a unique reward to the woman who faithfully follows out the requirements of vegetarianism, celibacy, and worship of Kwan-yin. Where there are no sons in the family, a daughter who will voluntarily take such vows, and live up to them, may take the place of a son, both in worshipping the ancestors and in sharing in the family estates. This fact illustrates well the degree to which Buddhism has adapted itself to ancestor worship, to which it was originally opposed.

The whole social program of the popular religion grows out of the Buddhistic system of rewards and merits. "Do a good deed" is an expression one often hears on the lips of beggars and others. There are many ways of doing good and thereby laying up for one's self merit in the other world There are three, however, which are universally approved, while all the others are often lost sight of. These three are: giving to beggars, building roads or bridges, and contributing to the building or maintenance of temples.

5.Animism. That there is a strain of animism in these sim-

ple folks is quite evident to the casual observer. A tree gaudily decorated in strips of red cloth is a common sight. Below the tree candles may be burning, or incense sticks sending their fragrance upward. By a question one learns that "a spirit has manifested himself here." By a second query the information is obtained that the leaves, or the bark, or perhaps the root of the tree, has wrought healing, and the grateful beneficiary thus honors the spirit and makes his presence and his power known to the whole countryside. Sometimes such a spirit in a tree gains great popularity, and, if lasting, a temple springs up in which to house the spirit more perfectly. Such trees are, of course, not to be cut down, so in many sections such sacred or semi-sacred trees are the only ones that have been left.The Chinese Banyan, being the largest tree in China, is usually the one to be so honored. Bridges are also capable of "manifesting the presence of a spirit," and are honored in the same way as trees.

The River God, The Thunder God, the gods of the seasons and many other animistic deities are represented by idols and worshipped throughout the land.

6. The Kitchen God, The Supreme God, Heaven, has a very unique way of keeping tab on his earthly creatures. This is by the use of his lowly servant, the Kitchen God. On Chinese New Year, a brand new kitchen god — a bit of clean new paper, on which is pictured the god and his court — is installed in his place in the kitchen. It is the duty of this god to keep a record of all the acts of the family during the year. On the last day of the year, he is ceremonially sent to heaven by burning. As a bit of precaution, in some sections,

especially in the North, molasses is smeared upon the mouth of the god before burning to guard against his reporting things Heaven would better not know.[1] The new kitchen god, which is put in its place the following day, is regarded by some as merely a new dwelling place for the same god. By others it is looked upon as a new god, a stranger, against whose flight precautions must be taken until he becomes accustomed to his surroundings.

7. Superstition. Remembering the superstitions that exist among Christians so persistently in the West, it ill becomes us to make much of the superstitions of the Chinese. We shall mention only a few universal practices which are based upon superstitious beliefs. The first is the use of door gods. In preparing for the New Year, not only is a new kitchen god purchased, but a new door god for each door, if it be a street door. The front door has two leaves, so the door gods are sold in pairs, the two of a pair being exactly alike except facing in opposite directions, so that when pasted on the outside of the doors they will face each other. These gods are not worshipped. They are put on the doors for the purpose of deceiving ghosts into thinking the house is guarded by two armed men. It is for this reason that the most war-like, fiercest looking door gods are the most popular.

Another set of superstitions expresses itself in the use of numerous charms. A copper coin which has been rubbed on a brass idol, when sewed onto the baby's cap, has efficacy to keep disease away for a year. Miniature monkeys, hearts,

1. Soothill, W.E.: The Three Religions of China. Hodder & Stoughton, London & N. Y. 1913. pp.160,302,303.

and fruits, made of cloth and stuffed, are worn by children of all ages on certain holidays. Numerous other charms are made and worn by both men and women of the more ignorant classes on all sorts of occasions.

One other superstition, although not so commonly practiced as the foregoing, is interesting here because of its bearing upon ancestor worship. The magpie is supposed to exercise special regard for the ancestors. If a young magpie can be induced to stay in the home, it will bring good luck to the family. It is capable of worshipping the ancestors as a son, and if a real son neglects his duty to his parents or ancestors, the magpie inflicts punishment upon him, in some form not yet clear.

8. Taoism. The ancient Lao Tze and his brilliant interpreter, Chwang Tze, would be shocked could they learn that their lofty religion had degenerated to such an extent that the only place it could be considered in a study like this is under the general head of superstition. The place that Taoism occupies today in Chinese religious life is well portrayed by Dr. Soothill in his descriptions of the occupations of the Taoist priests:

> "They are open to any kind of an engagement, whether exorcising devils, releasing souls from hell, seeking the advice of the gods through divination or through spiritualistic medium, organizing public processions to escort away the demons of plague, arranging theatrical performances to celebrate the 'birthdays' of the gods — indeed, there is not a stroke of superstitious business in which they are not prepared to take a hand and turn a dishonest penny." 1

9. Rain-making. The taoist priests are the chief rain-makers of China, but the Buddhist gods and ancestors as well

1 Soothill, W.E.: The Three Religions of China. Hodder & Stoughton, London & N. Y. 1913. p.165.

as Taoist gods are invoked. The idea seems clear, however, even to the most ignorant, that in the last analysis it is the Supreme Deity, Heaven, who actually gives the rain, for does not rain visibly come down from heaven? Various methods are used to induce the gods to send rain. The magistrate of the smitten locality first of all proclaims a fast which consists in abstinence from all animal food. During the time of the fast no animal life is to be taken. The fast usually ends with the required rain, as it continues until rain comes. If the drought is severe, the South gate of the city is sometimes closed to prevent the entrance of the spirit of the South wind which carries drought. Meanwhile many citizens make pilgrimages to nearby or to more distant temples. Water from a spring is sometimes sprinkled on the floor of the temple, either from the magical theory that like produces like, or from their anxiety to make the god understand by demonstation just what the request is. Williams tells of a governor in Canton who ordered the god to be hauled out into the scorching sun to convince him of the necessity of sending rain.

10. Geomancy. It is in the realm of geomancy and necromancy however that it is impossible to distinguish the superstitious and the truly religious, and to separate Taoist elements from ancestor worship. Geomancy in China takes the form and the name of "feng suei." 'Feng suei' is a pseudo-science. It builds on the theory that the natural landscape bears a very definite relation to human destiny. The hills and the valleys with their individual shapes; the rivers with their direction; the soil, its color and kind, — all have their own meaning and value. When these

elements are properly related and in the right proportion with each other, good fortune will result for the people of the community. It is natural then that such a place should be sought out for the building of a city. But care must be exercised lest the very building of houses and laying out of streets should destroy that nice proportion of the influences, and ill luck should follow. Doctors of "feng-suei" must therefore be consulted before any building is undertaken. It is unavoidable, however, that in the ordinary activities of human life, these "feng-suei" influences should be disturbed to some extent. The harmony is then restored by the building of a Pagoda, which has therefore become the most characteristic element of a Chinese landscape. Of course such acts as cutting trees and digging wells and graves change the landscape and affect the proportion of the influences, it may be for the better or for the worse. It is very important to know which way the effect will be before the deed is done. It is the business of the "feng-suei" doctor for a price to give the desired information.

In the matter of locating sites of graves, the office of doctor of "feng-suei" becomes doubly important. Not only is the welfare of the living at stake, but the repose of the dead as well. It is at this point, then, that "feng-suei" gets mixed up with ancestor worship. An unfortunate grave makes an unhappy spirit; and an unhappy spirit makes tormented descendants. No wonder, then, that neither time nor expense is spared to be assured of a burial place which will be in harmony with the "feng-suei" influences of the place.

11. Divination. It has always been assumed in Chinese religions

that the will of the departed ancestor and of gods in general could be known. Originally, the practice of divination was limited to the ancestral temple where by means of certain instruments the ancestors could communicate to their descendants the will of Heaven. Today, however, there are numerous methods of divination, both in the temples and in the homes of professional diviners. There are methods even by which any lay person may to some extent divine the will of the ancestors. As an instance of this, any person may learn which of the departed spirits is causing his illness by pronouncing their names, one by one, at the same time trying to make a pair of chopsticks stand alone in a bowl of water. After numerous efforts the chopsticks finally stand, for an instant only, and the name which happened to be on the lips at that moment is the name of the troublesome spirit. But if you would know exactly what the spirit demands, a professional (usually a Taoist priest) must be consulted and his fee paid.

In the temples, Buddhist and Taoist alike, a common form of divination is to take two pieces of bamboo root, each flat on one side and convex on the other. The enquirer, having offered his sacrifice and stated his question, is asked to choose which shall be his favorable sign: both convex sides up, both flat sides up, or one convex and one flat side up. Then the pieces are tossed by the priest, and if they fall according to prestated choice, the augury is favorable. Another method, sometimes used in conjunction with this, is to draw at random a slip from a bamboo tube. The number on the slip corresponds with a strip of paper kept by the priest, which he gives to the enquirer in exchange for his

slip. On the paper is written the fortune of the enquirer. Most of them promise a son, but worded so ambiguously that any fortune might be construed as filling it. The former method is often used to check up on the latter, to learn whether the fortune on the strip of paper is reliable. If not, they draw again, each time of course paying a fee to the officiating priest.

In this brief summary of Chinese religion, Confucianism has not been discussed because as a popular religion its influence is negligible. The moral influence it exerts is great, but rather as an ethical system than as a religion.The religious side of Confucianism is embodied in ancestor worship, which is to be our theme throughoutthe following chapters.

CHAPTER II.

THE THEORY AND MEANING OF ANCESTOR WORSHIP.

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THE THEORY AND MEANING OF ANCESTOR WORSHIP.

In undertaking to discuss the meaning of ancestor worship we are very conscious of our limitations. It is the limitation of a psychologist who sets himself to describe spiritual states which he himself has never experienced. Our observations are necessarily objective, and inner meanings cannot be objectively observed. We depend therefore upon three sources for our data — the ancient classics, the objective forms of the present practice, and the statement or testimony of the worshippers.

A. Classical ancestor worship.

1. Nature of the classics. It should be remembered that the classics were official rather than popular documents. The doctrines they advocated were rather policies of state than principles for individual living. Filial piety is taught as the background for the promulgation of a similar relation between the subject and the sovereign. The ancestor worship of the classics refers primarily to imperial ancestors, though general ancestor worship was also taught, and had of course existed from the beginning of history and extends back into legend, and seems to have been practiced from the beginning of the Chinese race.[1] It may not be assumed, therefore, that the prevalent beliefs and practices of the age of the sages are reflected in the classics. Such a conception would be as erroneous as to suppose that Hegelianism expresses the prevailing faith and practice of his time. Nev-

1. Soothill, W.E.: The Three Religions of China. Hodder & Stoughton, London & N. Y. 1913. p. 212.

ertheless, the ideals of the classics studied generation after generation, cannot but have colored to some extent the meaning of the ceremonies in the minds of the students at least. We shall therefore find it both interesting and profitable to take a glance into the classics and cull out some of the more significant passages relative to ancestor worship and see what conclusions we can draw from them.

2. Presence of dead at feasts. In the Classics the dead are always assumed to be present actually at feasts to partake of the offerings and to enjoy the devotion of the living. Their presence cannot be definitely known, but must always be taken for granted:

> "They (the ancients) knew not whether the spirit were there or here, or far off, away from all men. Might not that offering inside the gate (at weddings) be said to be a searching for the spirit in its distant place?" [1]

Confucius himself feared to be dogmatic on the subject. When asked whether the dead had knowledge of the services and offerings of the living, he replied:

> "Were it catagorically declared that they had such knowledge, he feared that filial sons would utterly impoverish themselves by their filial offerings; whereas, on the other hand, if it were said that they had no knowledge, he feared that unfilial sons would become utterly irreligious!" [2]

Though there was this theoretical uncertainty, practically it was to be ignored and ancestors should be sacrificed to and served "as if they were present!" [3]

The King, Pan-Kang, who reigned about 1400 B. C., positively asserts the presence and the knowledge of the spirits. In addressing a group of his subjects, he says,

1. LI KI, Bk. IX. Sacred Books of the East, Legge's translation.
2. Soothill, W.E.: The Three Religions of China. Hodder & Stoughton, London. 1913. p.172. Quoting "Chia Yii" or "Family Sayings"
3. Analects. Bk. III; Ch. 12.

"When I offer sacrifices to my predecessors, your forefathers are present to share in them. They enjoy all the happiness I confer (on the living) and the suffering I inflict, and I cannot dare to reward virtue that does not exist."[1]

3. Power of ancestors over the living.

Throughout the classics, the supreme power is in the hands of Heaven, conceived of personally as Shang Ti, Whatever powers the ancestors exercised over their descendants, therefore, must hve been relegated to them by him. "No man, even though a king, and no king, even though deceased, has any power to tamper with the moral laws of the universe ordained by Heaven !"[2]

Nevertheless, from whatever source the power was derived, the Classics consistently ascribe to the ancestors the power of sending blessings or punishment upon their descendants according to their deeds. The speech of Pan-Kang, from which we quoted above in which he is defending his purpose to remove his capitol, is unique and interesting in its argument. If he should fail to move the capitol, he says:

"My high sovereign (the founder of the dynasty) would send down on me great punishment for my crime and say, 'Why do you oppress my people?' If you, the myriads of the people do not cherish one mind with me in my plans, the former kings will send down on you great punishment for your crimes and say, 'Why do you not agree with our grandson?' When they punish you from above, you will have no way of escape."[3]

In the beautiful poetry of the Book of Odes, the joyous festal occasion when sacrifices are offered to the dead is described in detail, including the promise of the ancestors to send blessings upon their faithful descendants.After the sacrifice is all arranged, even to the final adjustment

1. Shu King, Pt.IV, Bk.VII, Sec.1, Ch.2.Legge's translation.
2. Addison, J.T.:Chinese Ancestor Worship. Chong Hua Shing Kung Hui, Tokyo, 1925. p.12.
3. Shu King, Pt.IV, Bk.VII, Sec.2, Ch.2.

of the last piece of meat, then,

"Grandly come our progenitors;
Their spirits happily enjoy the offerings;
Their filial descendants receive blessings:—
They will reward him with great happiness,
With myriads of years, life without end."

And then when the guests are all seated, and

"Every form is according to rule;
Every smile and word as they should be,"

the spirits, through the personator, make the following response:

"Fragrant has been your filial sacrifice,
And the spirits have enjoyed your spirits and viands.
They confer on you a hundred blessings;
Each as it is desired,
Each as sure as law.
You have been exact and expeditious;
They will ever confer on you the choicest favors,
In myriads and tens of myriads." [1]

This Ode leaves no doubt as to the actual presence of the spirits, nor as to the blessings expected to follow correct observance of the rites.It would appear from some passages, however, that to Confucius himself, the thought of the dead actually using the articles offered by the living was repellent. "Woe is me," he says in the Book of Rites, "that the dead should be thought to use the things of the living! It is almost as bad as human immolation." [2]

4. Spiritual meaning of the sacrifice. In a majority of cases, the purpose of the sacrifice is to ward off punishment and to secure temporal blessings. There are a few instances however, of a higher, more spiritual meaning. In the Book of House Ceremonies, the great philosopher Chu Hsi says,

"The object of worship is nothing else than performing all

1. Shih King. Pt. II. Bk. VI, Ode V.
2. Moule,A.E.:New China and Old,Seeley & Co.London,1891.p.26.

that is dictated by a feeling of true love and respect." [1]

And a deeper meaning yet is set forth in the Book of Rites:

> "The sacrifices of such men (sincere and virtuous) have their own blessing; — not indeed what the world calls blessing (i.e., not success or long life)..... Thus intelligently does he offer his sacrifice without seeking for anything to be gained by them."[2]

> "Though we may infer that such disinterested sacrifice was not universal, and perhaps not even customary, we can at least conclude that it represented the standard set by the best classical tradition."[3]

> "In the classics it is repeatedly stated that the real value of the offering is to be measured by the spirit in which it is made; the true sacrifice is the heart of the offerer."[4]

It is, of course, impossible to draw reliable conclusions from isolated passages. There are one or two things however which are quite clear. To quote Professor Addison:

> "The dead are undoubtedly regarded as actually present at the sacrificial feasts and able to enjoy them. The rites are thus based upon a genuine objective reality. It is equally plain that the sacrifices are regarded as a supremely important duty, the neglect of which results in misfortune and the observance of which brings happiness. Beyond these two points it is difficult to go without entering the field of controversy!"[5]

Unfortunately it is not so plain with what purpose the rites were performed, and to what extent the ancestors themselves were regarded as having power to directly influence for good or evil the lives of their descendants.

And it is therein that our problem lies.

1. Hozumi, Nobushige, Ancestor Worship and Japanese Law, Z. P. Maruza & Co. Tokyo. 1901. p.5.
2. Addison, J.T.: Chinese Ancestor Worship, Chung Hua Kung Hui Tokyo, 1925. p.24. "Doctrine of the Mean." Ch. XIX, 5.
3. Ibid, p.24.
4. Hastings Encyclo. of Rel. and Ethics, Vol. III, p.731.
5. Addison, J.T.: Chinese Ancestor Worship, Chung Hua Sheng Kung Hui, Tokyo, 1925. p.10.

B. The popular meaning of ancestor worship.

1. Conception of the condition of the departed.

When we pass from the realm of the classics into the practices of the present, we believe we find four different conceptions of the condition of departed spirits. It may be well to remind ourselves again however that we are only onlookers, and our conclusions may, for that reason, be erroneous. From our data, however, it appears that the spirits may be either gods, or patron saints , or hostile beings, or merely transported human beings. These conceptions may be held by individuals of different intellectual attainments, or two or three if not all of these conceptions may be held by the same person, applied of course, to different spirits.

a. As. Gods. Since the Emperor is the Son of Heaven, it is not surprising that his spirit after his departure to the other world should become a god. As he ruled over the living in this world, so he rules over the spirits in that. Mr. Hozumi, a Japanese writer declares that the Imperial Ancestors are worshipped by the people "not only because they are the ancestors of our August Sovereign, but because they are the sovereigns of our ancestors."[1] This statement of a modern Japanese is in accord with the assumption of the Chinese classics that the departed emperors are still the vice regents of Heaven, and it is through them that Heaven speaks and acts.[2]

There can be no doubt that in the minds of the ignorant masses of the Chinese, the family ancestors are real divinities. this is suggested by the fact that the ancestral

1. Hozumi, Nobushigi: Ancestor Worship and Jap.Law, J.P.Maruza & Co.Ltd. Tokyo, 1901. p.40.
2. Addison, J.T.: Chinese Ancestor Worship, Chung Hua Sheng Kung Kui, Tokyo, 1925. p.13.

tablet is commonly referred to as an idol and is held in the same superstitious awe as that in which idols are regarded. A very convincing suggestion of the divinity of ancestors is also found in the common practice of swearing by one's ancestors, and in the fact that the vilest profanity consists of curses upon the ancestors of the antagonist. The belief that the spirits can and do watch over their descendants, rewarding and punishing as the occasion demands, is too evident to be disputed, and that they do so in their own divine power is no doubt the belief of some and perhaps of most of the common people.

The deification of Confucius, though it does not prove that ancestors do become gods, at least proves that men may be elevated to that rank. In his case, however, it was only after many centuries, and after many successive steps, that the deification was complete. Soothill gives the history of that process.In 175 B.C., Kao Ti visited the tomb of Confucius and offered an ox to his spirit. In A.D.1 he was canonized as "Duke Ni, the All Complete and Illustrious." In A. D. 57 sacrifices were ordered to be made to him in conjunction with Duke Wen. A further step was taken in 609 when a temple was erected to him in all centers of learning, and in 659, when his present title "Kung Fu Tze," was conferred upon him. For all practical purposes, therefore, he was deified in these early centuries. But it was as a second class deity. He was still inferior to Heaven, or Shang Ti. The final step was taken, then, in 1907 when the Empress Dowager by proclamation raised him to the first rank, making him equal with Heaven and ordered that the same worship and honors be paid to

him as were paid to Heaven.[1] The first president of the Republic repeated the decree, but it has never been strictly enforced.

b. As patron saints. It is possible — probable in many cases — that the spirits of ancestors, while not occupying the position of gods, sustain the relation of patron-saints to their descendants. Heaven is supreme but too honorable to be approached directly. So the ancestors are the mediators between the living and Heaven. They occupy much the same position and serve much the same purpose, that the saints do in Catholicism.

As patronsaints, th spirits are, of course, interested in all the affairs of their descendants, and champion their cause before Shang Ti. Therefore they must be kept informed of all the occurences of family life. Hence deaths, betrothals, marriages, proposed journeys, return from a journey, etc., are duly announced. In the abscence of these facts, the spirits would be handicapped in the performance of their work of intercession.

c.. As hostile beings. The dead are sometimes looked upon as hostile beings. The hostile ones are ordinarily, of course, not one's own ancestors. A person feared in life is even more feared after death. One's enemies, or those who have met death in an untimely way, might well be supposed to use their ghostly powers "to get even." But there are cases where one's own ancestors might be considered hostile. First there are those fathers with cruel dispositions who have been merciless to their children in life.Death would not give them a

1. Soothill, W.E.:The Three Religions Of China, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1913. p. 37.

a kinder disposition, so naturally they would be greatly feared. Such cases are of course rare. A most usual cause of a son's belief in the hostility of his ancestors is found in his own consciousness that his treatment of them while living deserves to be punished.

d. As transported human beings. One consideration that makes it hard for us to determine what the conception of the Chinese actually is as to the condition of the departed, is the fact that there is so much of the strictly human in their thought of him. Worship, in the strict sense of the word, can be offered only to superior beings. In the common practice, ancestors do not seem to be superior. They are represented as having the same physical needs as when they had a physical body. Whatever good the worshipper may hope to gain for himself, the primary purpose of sacrifice seems to be to supply the actual need of the dead,— needs for food, for money and houses, and all those material things which contribute to one's social standing. The spirit is absolutely dependent upon the living for these things and is saved the inferiority to man which this would imply only by the fact that he can return the favor by his influence over the forces that make for prosperity in this world. The spirits are further dependent upon their posterity for their social position in the other world. Their fortunes rise and fall with the fortunes of their descendants. When a man has rank conferred upon him, his ancestors to the third generation are ennobled.[1]

> "The tendency of the stream of honor to flow upward is peculiar to China. There alone is it possible for a distinguished son to lift his deceased parents our of obscurity, and to confer upon their names the reflected lustre of his own rank."[2]

(Foot-note on following page.)

The converse of regarding humanly these spirits is the worship of human beings as spirits. The latter is a natural and logical outgrowth of the former, and shows how indistinct is the line of separation between spiritual and physical existence. As an example of the practice of the worship of living men, Degroot tells of the temple erected in Chiencheu, Fukien Province, to Tso Tsung-Tsang, a beloved viceroy who had been removed to another province. Here regular worship was carried on with prostrations, sacrifices of food, wine, tea, etc., and the Viceroy's birthday was celebrated with theatricals just as the "birthdays" of the gods.[3] In many temples are found idol-representations of the Empress Dowager which were set up and worshipped during her lifetime.

2. Motives for Worship.

As it is difficult to declare with certainty what the condition or position of the departed is, so it is equally impossible to speak with positiveness regarding the reasons why men worship their ancestors. The motives are many and varied.

a. Filial piety. To begin with the highest, we must name first filial piety. Sacrifice, we are told in the Book of Rites, means "directing one's thoughts to.The son directs his thoughts(to his parents) and then he can offer sacrifice" [4] "The worship is a continuation of homage and reverence shown on earth rather than worship rendered a god."[5] The son believes his parent to be dependent upon him for sustenance and care,

1. Hasting's Encyclo. of Rel.and Ethics, III, 729.
2. Martin, W A P:The Lore of Cathay,Fleming H. Revell Co.N.Y., 1901. p. 271.
3. Degroot,J J M:The Religion of the Chinese,Macmillan & Co. N.Y. 1910. p. 65.
4. Addison J T:Chinese Ancestor Worship Chung Hua Sheng Kung Hui. Tokyo, 1925. p.26.(LiKi.Bk.XXI,Sec.1,Ch.6).
5. Gray,J. H.:China,Macmillan & Co.London.1875. I,85.

and all the love and affection of his pious soul respond to the need.

> To regard the ancestral rites as the continuation of the homage and reverence shown to parents on earth, as the extension of filial piety beyond the grave, is characteristic not only of the Classics, but also of the best Chinese thought of today." [1]

> "It is the fundamental feeling of duty which prompts the sacrifices of the sophisticated as well as the naive, of the intellectual as well as the superstitious. Whether the dead are regarded as hungry and needing food, as present and requiring respectful attention, or as figures of the past living in the momory alone, their claim upon the living is insistent; and the first duty and desire of a son is to honor that claim with unremitting devotion."[2]

b. Fear. A less worthy motive for the worship of one's ancestors may be found in the fear of the consequences of the failure to do so. An angry parent, with absolute power over his son in this life is to be feared. How much more the angry spirit whose power is unrestricted by the limitations of a material body. Besides, even a well-disposed spirit might be lonely and snatch away the soul of a relative for companionship: or he may miss the administrations of a faithful servant to whom he was accustomed in life and may steal his soul away.[3]

> "Thus the dead rule the living throughout their lives by fear and the dread of calamity — if everythingis not done to propitiate them — an obsession at times too awful for words." [4]

> "The fear of their wrath is more real, more vivid than the fear of any of the other gods." [5]

c. Selfishness. Less worthy still as a motive for the worship of the dead is selfishness, which with some, nc

1. Addison: op.cit. p. 48.
2. Ibid. p. 50.
3. Hasting's Encyclo. of Rel.and Ethics, III, 429.
4. Ball,J D:The Chinese at Home,F H Revell Co.N.Y.1912.p21.
5. Encyclo. of Missions, p. 41.

doubt, is the ruling consideration. "While ancestor worship is founded upon high principles — the reverence and love of parents — it is in fact a duty rendered from motives of self-protection and self-interest."[1] To those who believe that the ancestors have power to bestow or to withold prosperity, this easily becomes the leading influence in his devotion. There are others who, skeptical or indifferent as to the spiritual value of the rites, perform them religiously in order to share in the ancestral estates. There are others still to whom social standing is the main thing. To stand well with an ancestor worshipping society, one must observe all the outward forms of filial piety extended to all generations.

d. No conscious motive. It is not to be supposed, however, that one or the other of these motives is consciously present in the mind of the average worshipper. In a majority of cases it is merely one of the accidents of filial piety. It is the customary and conventional thing to do. He sacrifices at the appointed seasons because others do, and because he always has done so, without asking himself why.

e. Mixed motive. In a majority of cases however, though there is no consciousness of why they perform the rites, there is nevertheless in the subconsciousness some motives which are brought into consciousness if the worshipper is interrogated. It will probably be found that no single motive actuates any individual but rather an intermingling of various motives. Filial love may be predominant in one, and fear or selfish interests in another, but the filial love of the former will be adulterated by the less worthy motives and the fear

1. Ibid. p.41. (Encyclopedia of Missions)

or selfish interests of the latter will be softened by the nobler feelings of affection and reverence.

Further light may be thrown on the meaning of ancestor worship by a look into the actual practices of the cult.

CHAPTER III.

ANCESTOR WORSHIP IN PRACTICE.

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Ideally, and from the standpoint of the Chinese, worship begins in the honor and reverence due to one's living parents. In the strict sense of actual worship, however, it does not and cannot begin until after death, which separates the spirit from its material body and thereby elevates it to a rank approaching that of the gods. In the description of the practice of ancestor worship, we shall therefore begin with the death and funeral of a parent and the accompanying rites, and proceed in later paragraphs with the later worship at the ancestral tablet, ancestral hall, and at the tomb.

A. The Funeral.

1. The idea of soul. Before entering upon the description of the funeral, however, and as a key to understanding some of the rites connected therewith, a word should be said regarding the Chinese idea of the soul. It is believed that every person has three souls, which, during the lifetime of the man make periodic ascents to Heaven to report, taking care of course that the three are never absent from the body at the same time. After death, one soul lingers near the body, one resides in the ancestral tablet, and the third takes its place among the spirits of the upper world. It is for the benefit of the soul lingering near the body that some of the rites are performed. Many of them, and probably the most prominent ones, are for the welfare of the spirit which, departing from the body, takes up his life among other spirits in the Western Heavens.

2. Rites for the "body spirit." It is because of belief in the first that such care is exercised in bathing and preparing the

the body for burial, a ceremony being made of even so small a matter as fetching water in which the body is to be bathed.[1] It is as a concession to this spirit that an effort is made to bury the body at home where it can receive the homage and worship of descendants.In order to accomplish this the coffined body is often carried across the whobe of a province, or even across the entire country, at immense expense. Every traveller in China is familiar with the sight — a group of eight carriers bearing a bit of silenced humanity. Upon the coffin is perched a cock, who seems to sense his importance, for he it is who guides the spirit that it may follow the body until its last resting place is reached.

Sometimes burial is long delayed; it may be waiting an auspicious day, or perhaps waiting until cthe family fortunes permit a more elaborate funeral, or perchance awaiting an opportunity to transport the corpse to the native city of the family. In this case incense is burned before the corpse daily. There is an element of danger in such delay, however. The spirit may become impatient of being so long deprived of rest in the tomb, and may bring ill-luck on the family or community. In times of draught or plague the magistrate sometimes orders the burial of all unburied corpses in the hope that thus the plague may be stayed.

3. Rites for the "soul-spirit." The main part of the funeral proper, however, is to insure the well-being of the other soul, whose social position among the spiritswill depend in some measure upon the elaborateness of the funeral. The first of these rites is performed while the patient is dying. Large

1.Williams,S.W.:The Middle Kingdom, CHas. Scribner's Sons. N Y,1904. II, 245.

quantities of "spirit money" are previded previously. Just as the dying man is drawing his last few labored breaths, this "spirit money" is burned, being thus converted into a substantial inheritance for the spirit in the other world. If the burning takes place a few minutes too late, the orphan spirits, forever hovering about, may snatch it up before it reaches its rightful owner, who would thus be left in want.

To equip this spirit for its social place among the shades, those left behind in this world supply everything that their imagination can create. A palace is provided, fully furnished, and manned with maid-servants and man-servants, wives and concubines. A sedan chair with liveried carriers and horses all saddled and ready for use are supplied. A complete wardrobe too is furnished. All these articles are made of thin paper, pasted over a framework of bamboo. All are burned at the grave, except the house, which is usually kept in the home for a while. One hundred days is considered the minimum time for a young wife, a year is the minimum for a mother or father of grown sons. During this time incense is kept burning before the spirit house in which the spirit is supposed to be residing. Finally it too is carried to the grave and burned with great ceremony. More "spirit money" is burned and sent along with the house to the spirit world.

A conspicuous part of every funeral is the noise of fife and the clash of cymbal which pass among the Chinese for music. This music is purported to assist the spirit in finding its way into the "Western Heaven." For the purpose of "opening the road" Buddhist and Taoist priests are indispensable, and are employed by all from the most intelligent

Confucianist to the most ignorant and superstitious coolie.

4. Details of the funeral. When the day of the funeral, decided upon by the professors of "feng-suei", arrives, a unique procession is formed. Banners and scrolls galore, the gifts of friends, are carried ahead. Then comes the band which has already done service for several days at the house. Then comes a gaily decorated sedan chair in which the tablet of the departed rides in state. The coffin itself comes next, to which long strips of white cloth are attached. All the sons and grandsons, even to the youngest, who are able to walk, get hold of the cloth and have the appearance of pulling the coffin which is really carried by a number of men which must be a multiple of eight. The oldest son, who shows signs of overwhelming grief, walks in the lead supported by a more distant relative. The women mourners walk behind, also holding strips of white cloth attached to the coffin. If theprocession is to proceed far, the women and small children may ride in sedan chairs.

5. Mourning. The custom of mourning may be considered a part of the ancestral worship.

> "No doubt the mourning signifies a sacrificial act by which the mourner offers or devotes to the departed his good clothing and valuables."[1]

During this period mourners often enter into a partial fast, the food not eaten by them being thus devoted to the departed.

The mourning costume for sons, daughters-in-law, and grandsons, is a complete suit of clothing made of the coarsest material, constructed with the utmost carelessness — long stitches and no hems. The mourner is so stricken with grief

1. Degroot, J J M: The Rel. Of the Chinese. Macmillan & Co. N.Y. 1910. p. 70.

as to be rendered quite careless of his personal appearance. Long strips of cloth of the same material are worn on the head. Married daughters of the deceased, being not considered members of the family, wear only the head cloth, and in some sections they wear no mourning at all, and are not even invited to attend the funeral.[1]

B. The Three Altars.

For the worship of ancestors of all generations the Chinese have three altars. As we have seen, the spirit of the departed is believed to be present both in the tablet prepared for it by the eldest son, and also at the grave where it hovers over the decaying body. It is natural therefore that worship should take place both at the grave and at the home where the tablet is kept. Usually the tablets of three generations of ancestors are kept in the shrine at the home. As the years go by, and others join the ranks of the departed, these are removed to the ancestral hall, and are replaced by the later arrivals in the realm of Spirits.

1. The Ancestral Tablet. Tradition places the origin of the ancestral tablet in the Chow dynasty, about 350 B. C. Some authorities, however, place it much earlier than that.[2] The mode of the origin is likewise unknown. Some have speculated upon the subject, however, and state that it was probably originally a miniature of the headstone of the tomb used when sacrifice was offered at the house instead of at the grave.[3]

The modern tablet varies in size from a few inches to two or three feet in heighth. The smaller ones consist of

1. Williams S W: The Middle Kingdom. Chas Scribner's Sons, N. Y. 1904. II, 249.
2. Hastings Encyclo.of Rel.and Ethics, III, 730.
3. Ibid, p. 730.

two upright pieces of wood, the outer piece fitting into a groove in the inner piece, and both set upright in a socket in a wooden case with a glass door. On both the outer and inner pieces of wood, the ancestor's name and title and the date of his birth are written. At the bottom of the outer slab are two characters which mean "Spirit Throne." The larger tablets usually consist of one thick piece of wood, not enclosed in a case. It bears the same inscription as the smaller tablets. Theoretically, incense is burned every day before the tablets. There is a proverb, however, which indicates that there is a tendency, when things are going smoothly, to forget the ancestors, and to remember them in times of need, when it is assumed that the ill luck is due to their neglect. Twice a month offerings of fruit and other dainties are made, accompanied by prostrations.Other special days for worship before the tablet are the first, fifth, and fifteenth days of the First Moon, the fifth of the Fifth Moon, the fifteenth of the Eighth Moon, and the last day of the year.These are all the feast days and the ancestors of three generations are the guests of honor. Any special family event, such as a wedding, is also an occasion for worship at the tablet.

Indeed the ancestors are assumed to be very much interested in so important an event as the reception of a new daughter-in-law. In the first place, they are consulted before the betrothal is agreed upon. The method of ascertaining their will in the matter is interesting.A paper bearing the name, date of birth, etc., of the girl in question is placed in the incense pot before the tablet. There it remains four days. If, during those days, anything untoward

such as a fight among the children or a dish broken, happens, it is interpreted as the voice of the all-wise ancestor, protesting against the match, and all arrangements are accordingly stopped, and a girl is sought elsewhere. If however, no such ill omens occur during the days of trial, the consent of the ancestors is assumed, and the betrothal completed. One of the features of the wedding ceremony is the introduction of the bride to the ancestors, when both bride and groom prostrate themselves before them, the groom invoking their blessing upon his mate.

2. The Ancestral Temple. The origin of the ancestral temple is prehistoric. It is recorded that the semi-historic, semi-legendary king, Shun (2250 B.C.), on his accession to the throne worshipped "in the Temple of the Accomplished Ancestor" and sacrificed to the "Six Honored Ones."[1] It is uncertain who these six were. They are construed by some to be the animistic spirits of the woods, springs, etc. It is not unlikely, however, that they represent the three latest generations of his own ancestors and the three generations of those of his predecessor, the famous Yao, with whose name that of Shun is always associated. The important fact for us in this little bit of history, however, is that the ancestral temple was already in existence in the time of Shun and was probably an old institution then.

Every clan has its ancestral temple. In some sections it is the custom to remove all tablets as soon as the period of mourning is over.[2] The more general custom, however, is to reserve three generations in the home, removing

1. Hastings Encyclo. of Rel. & Ethics. III, 729.
2. Hastings Encyclo. of Rely. & Ethics. III, 730.

to the temple only those beyond the third. In these temples the tablets are arranged chronologically, those of the same generation being placed in a line.[1]

Whereas worship is conducted daily in the home, it is done only on special days in the ancestral hall. Some of the special days enumerated above are celebrated at the temple rather than at the home. Sacrifices of food and wine are offered. It is not unusual to offer a whole dressed pig! Fortunately the spirits require only the essence, the substance of the offering remaining for the family feast the following day. Burning of "spirit money" and of incense, lighting of candles, and firing of fire crackers, form a part of all such worship. In these ceremonies, as in those in the home, no priest is necessary. The oldest member of the family or clan officiates.

3. The Tomb. The worship at the third altar, the tomb, is limited to twice a year. The chief of these occasions is the Spring Festival, called Tsing-Ming, occuring in the early part of April. On this day a family picnic[2] is held at the grave. Sacrifices are offered, paper money, candles, and incense are used very much as on other occasions in the Ancestral Hall. The idolatrous nature of the ceremony is illustrated by the following prayer offered at the tomb:

> "Tankwang, 12th year, 3rd moon, 1st day. I, Lin Kwang, the second son of the third generation, presume to come before the grave of my ancestor, Lin Kung. Revolving years have brought again the season of spring. Cherishing sentiments of veneration, I look up and sweep your tomb. Prostrate, I pray that you will come and be present and that you will grant to your posterity that they may be

1. Williams, S W: The Middle Kingdom, Chas. Scribner's Sons, N.Y. 1904. II, 251.
2. Martin, W A P: The Lore of Cathay, Fleming H. Revell Co. N.Y. 1901. p267.

> prosperous and illustrious..... Always grant your safe protection. My trust is in your divine spirit. Reverently I present a goose and a fish; also an offering of five plates of fruit with libations of spirituous liquors, earnestly entreating that you will come and view them."[1]

The common name for this day's exercise is "sweeping the tombs," which indicates the distinguishing feature of the celebration. The graves are swept and repaired, all grass is scraped away, and a fresh layer of earth is applied. When all is done, the fact is proclaimed by long strips of red and white paper which are left to flutter in the wind until they are blown away. The work done, the family is free to engage in a social time and a feast is enjoyed. This is one of the joyful occasions of the year, in which every Chinese in the Republic except Christians shares.

C. Orphan spirits.

There is one other belief that should be mentioned here as it affects the worship of ancestors in a number of ways. In their imagination they people the spirit world with a variety of beings such as are found upon earth. There are robbers, and there are beggars, the presence of whom is a real menace to the orderly and law-abiding spirits. There are three classes of spirits who, upon entering the spirit world, become at once ghosts of the orphan or beggar type. They are first, those who die leaving no posterity; second, those whose posterity are neglectful of their holy duties to the dead; and the third, those base men who in life were themselves neglectful. In all the rites described in the preceding paragraphs, the worshippers take precautions to pro-

1. Williams, S W: The Middle Kingdom, Chas Scribner's Sons N. Y. 1904. II, 253.

tect the spirits of their own ancestors against these poor wandering hungry ghosts. One instance was mentioned in the case of the "spirit money" to be burned just as the dying drew his last breath. Another time when care must be exercised is when there is sacrificing before the ancestral tablet. Lest the offering be carried away by a robber spirit, an offering is set outside the door in the hope that he will accept that and not intrude on the happiness of the family. Again, at the worship at the tomb, it is customary to scatter "spirit money" freely on the winds, thus bribing the orphan spirits not to interfere with the family sacrifice. At funerals too, "spirit money" is scattered along the roads to secure a safe passage for the spirit through territory presumably held by robber spirits.

But these orphan spirits are not only a menace to law-abiding spirits: their existence is inimical to the welfare of the living. Regular annual festivals are therefore celebrated with the one purpose of propitiating and satisfying them. Paper articles, such as are used at funerals, are now presented to the orphan ghosts. Elaborate sacrifices are offered with stirring music. The ceremony, consisting of prayers, compliments, and wishes for the well being of the ghosts, is quite lengthy and is repeated for every conceivable class of spirits, so that none may be left out.

CHAPTER IV.

ANCESTOR WORSHIP AND CHINESE LIFE.

ANCESTOR WORSHIP AND CHINESE LIFE.

A. The real religion of China.

1. The one thing on which the Chinese unite.

In the introduction, we discussed at some length the religion of the Chinese people and found it to consist of a great many practices which did not necessarily belong to and particular system, as well as much that is distinctly Buddhistic, Taoistic, and Confucianistic. These practices, though quite general, would by no means pass "en masse" in all parts of the Republic, nor with all people, perhaps, even within a limited area. The one faith and practice which really unites the whole nation is ancestor worship. There is no difference of opinion about that. There may be disagreement as to the minor meaning of the rites, there may be varying degrees of idolatry in the worship of different individuals and families, but that worship of one's ancestors is a duty incumbent upon every son is a point which passes absolutely undisputed in all parts of the Eighteen Provinces. Without doubt the same is true in the Outer States.

2. Interwoven with every activity of life.

Confucius says in the Analects that filial piety is "the root of all benevolent actions".[1] In its broader meaning of ancestor worship, it is indeed the very root of Chinese life. A cross-section of Chinese life, taken at almost any point, reveals somewhere in the strata, an outcropping of the practice itself or the faith underlying it, Let it be in the realm of law. Marriage

1. Confucian Analects. Bk. 1; Ch.2.

and divorce laws, laws regarding adoption, property laws, laws of inheritance, and others, are aimed to insure the well-being of the departed ancestors. The Encyclopedia Brittanica traces the whole matter of wills and testaments, even in Western lands, back to ancestor worship.[1] Let the cross section, if you will, be in the village life. Such matters as laying out of streets, the construction of roads, and the erection of buildings, are never undertaken without due regard to the interests of the ancestors. Take a cross section in the daily life of an individual. Ancestor worship is found to influence or affect his every act. If a soldier is about to go on a campaign, his last act is to go to the tombs of his ancestors and report the fact to them. If a student is about to go abroad, or a merchant is setting out on a journey, he reverently pays his respects at the ancestral tombs before embarking. The Book Of Rites gives the following instructions:

> "When one is leaving his State, he wails at the graves (of his fathers) and thentakes his journey, while on returning to it, he does not wail, but goes to look at the graves, and then enters the city."
>
> "When you pass by a grave, you should bow forward to the cross bar, and when you pass a place of sacrifice, you should dismount."[2]

Into the more intimate family aspects of Chinese life, we find ancestor worship even more closely woven. It is not only on special occasions such as the above that ancestor worship is in evidence. It claims a share in each day's duties. Filial sons will not fail for a single day to burn incense and pay

1. Encyclopedia Brittanica, Vol I."Ancestor Worship."
2. Müller, Max: Li Ki ii, Sacred Books of the East. Translated by James Legge, 1879. Clarendon Press, Oxford.

his respects to his departed ancestors.Thus the ancestors exert a real influence on the daily life of every loyal family in the nation. All of the joys and sorrows, longings and aspirations, successes and defeats, are shared with the spirits. How extensive and how constant is the influence will be brought out in the following paragraphs where we shall seek to trace the effects of ancestor worship upon the life and morale of the nation.

B. Ethical elements in Ancestor Worship.

1. Filial piety. Some writers maintain that ancestor worship is only filial piety extended beyond the grave. We may not agree that it is only such, but that it is at least that, none will deny. This conclusion naturally presupposes filial piety to living parents, and this attitude is present to a marked degree. It is fostered by the Hero Stories told to children generation after generation. In the "Book of Twenty Four Filials" some of these stories are collected.[1] In the Han dynasty, the children are told, there lived a poor man, who upon his father's death, had no money for the funeral expenses. Rather than allow his honored father to suffer a cheap burial, he sold himself into slavery to obtain the necessary money, and conducted an elaborate funeral. A few days later, he met a woman who asked to be taken as his wife. He took her, and within two months, she had woven three hundred pieces of silk, enough to purchase her husband's freedom.This purpose accomplished, she disappeared from his sight.

1. Williams, S. W.:The Middle Kingdom. Chas.Scribner's Sons. New York, 1904. I, 538f.

Another lad, in the Tsin dynasty, was very much grieved because he could not find any bamboo sprouts to satisfy his mother's longing. He leaned against a tall bamboo and wept. Nature was touched by his filial piety and put forth bamboo sprouts in abundance all about him.

There are many such stories designed to instill this one idea into the minds of the young. How well they have served their purpose is illustrated daily. Stories abound of high officials who carry out the unreasonable whims of childish parents with implicit obedience.[1] A more reasonable indication of healthful filial piety, however, is found in the universal regard for old age, which is observable in all classes of Chinese society, from the coolie laborer to the mandarin himself. Not only their own parents are reverenced, but all old people are treated with a special respect that might well serve as a pattern for our conduct. As to their own parents, ideally, the Chinese satisfy their every whim so far as it is possible. On the whole, perhaps, this ideal is lived up to about as well as the coresponding Christian ideal is in this country. At any rate the parents have the upper seats at the family table, the tea is passed to them first, and the grandchildren are taught to respect and obey them. One good point in connection with filial piety, and the whole of ancestor worship, is that the mother is respected and served on exactly the same footing as the father. Because of this, the position of women, while not equalling that in Christ-

1. Holcomb, Chester: The Real Chinaman, Dodd, Mead, & Co. New York, 1895. p.91.

ian countries, is infinitely higher than that among non-ancestor-worshipping, non-Christian peoples.

2. Incentive to morality and to valor. Ancestor worship, moreover, has had a very wholesome effect upon the morality of the Chinese race, "so that socially and morally, China presents a very different aspect from all other non-Christian countries."[1] It is the duty of every man to pass on untarnished the name he received from his fathers. So close is the union between the living and the dead, that whatever ill fame the living incurs, is suffered also by the forefathers in the spirit world. "How could I look my ancestors in the face if I should do such a base thing?" they argue, and such a thought as well as the fear of punishment which the ancestors might mete out to them both deters from evil and stimulates to good.

> "Although your father and mother are dead, if you propose to yourself any good work, only reflect how it will make thier names illustrious, and your purpose will be fixed. So if you propose to do what is not good, only consider how it will disgrace the names of your father and mother, and you will desist from your purpose."[2]

In some sections it is the custom on feast days for the oldest member of the family or clan to recount for the benefit of younger members, the outstanding virtues of the deceased, recommending them for imitation. The faults are entirely forgotten, and the dead stand forth as perfect saints and heroes in the eyes of their descendants. There can be no doubt of the moral benefit of such a practice. "In respect to moral efficacy," says Martin, "it (ancestor worship) would appear

1. Moule, Ven.A.E.:China New and Old. Seeley and Co. Ltd,, London, 1891. p. 204.
2. Williams, S. W.: The Middle Kingdom.Chas.Scribner's Sons, New York, 1904. Quoting the Li Ki, or Book of Rites.

to be only second to that of faith in the presence of an all-seeing deity."[1]

"Be careful to reflect glory on your forefathers" [2] is a formula addressed alike to the student and to the soldier. To the average soldier, it is not for his country that he fights. He knows little of the cause his general is sponsoring. But each soldier fights beneath the watchful gaze of his own ancestors, and he must reflect glory on them. Wen Wang, a leader of a rebellion in the twelfth century issued the following manifesto before entering the combat:

> "If I gain the victory, it will not be through my own prowess, but through the merits of my father. If I am beaten, it will not be from any fault in my father, but solely from want of virtue in me."[3]

C. Evils of ancestor worship.

1. Filial piety carried to extremes.

Turning from these beneficial results of ancestor worship, we shall now consider the evil effects, which seem to be more numerous than the good. It may have been noted in the paragraph on filial piety above, that the practice was carried to a ridiculous extreme. Indeed, in its express demands, filial piety becomes a form of tyranny. "It leaves no room for the independent action or personal judgement, and a man cannot exercise his individual powers of manhood until he is too far advanced in years to have their exercise productive of growth or any other beneficial results."[4]

1. Martin, W.A.P.: The Lore of Cathay. Fleming H. Revell Co. New York, 1901. p. 274.
2. Ibid, p. 271.
3. Ibid, p. 265.
4. Holcombe, Chester: The Real Chinaman. Dodd, Mead & Co. New York, 1895. p. 89.

That is why there is such a dearth of leaders at the present time. Slavish subjection to parents so paralyzes the individuality that the qualities that make for leadership are not developed. That may explain too why a majority of the outstanding leaders of China today in the political world are either Christians, or have been directly affected in their earlier days by Christian influences.

2. Fosters the spirit of revenge. Ancestor worship, moreover, fosters the spirit of revenge. It becomes a religious duty to revenge a wrong to one's father, and when that spirit is once turned loose, it knows no boundaries. Even personal grievances against members of another clan are taken up by the group and feuds result. Especially is this the case in the province of Kwangtung. Though clan feuds are not so frequent in the other sections of China, private revenge runs rampant throughout the land. Thier methods/ are so ingenious that a Chinese will go very slowly and consider well before he will run the risk of giving offense to his neighbor and laying himself liable to revenge. Every method "that malice can suggest or opportunity tempt"[1] is made use of. Houses or boats may be plundered, or burned, but that would be a mild method. To really injure a man in China, one must strike at his reputation or at his ancestors. The revenge seeker levels his art against both. Most insidious attacks are made on one's character, and the propagation of scandal is often so successful as to cost the victim not only his standing in society, but his means of livlihood as well. The graves of ancestors are sometimes violated,

1. Williams, S.W.: The Middle Kingdom. Chas. Scribner's Sons. New York, 1904. II, 484.

or the tombstones injured. It is such violence as this to graves, which calls for deadly revenge on the part of the whole tribe, and creates new feuds.

3. Encourages early marriage.

Three of the most direct evils resulting from ancestor worship may be named together as they are rooted in the same fundamental doctrine. It is a truism that if the welfare of the dead depend upon the continued offices of the living, it becomes the highest duty of the living to perpetuate the line of descendants to attend to the immortal spirits. Mencius' words that "three things are unfilial, and of these to have no sons is the worst,"[1] occasion no surprise. It is the logical and only right attitude in the face of such a belief regarding ancestors. In their attempt to fulfill filial duty, therefore, three evils have been perpetuated — early marriage, polygamy, and concubinage.

Death is no respecter of persons. The young as well as the old are claimed as its prey. Therefore it behooves a young man to be married soon after he reaches puberty in order that he may be on the safe side as far as descendants are concerned. Early marriage thus becomes a religious duty. It matters not that the youth has no means of supporting a family. His father asumes the responsibility for that, and the lad, if a student, may remain in school, or he may join his father in his effort to provide for the family.

4. Polygamy and concubinage.

For the same reason, a man is not only justified in practicing polygamy, but he is not justified in neglecting to do so provided his true

1. Bashford, J. W.: China. An Interpretation. The Abingdon Press, New York, 1916. p. 25.

wife fails to bear him a son. Legally, a man may have only one wife, but the only limit to the number of concubines he may have, is that imposed by his own ability to purchase them and to support a large household. A man's financial and social standing is reckoned on very much the same basis as that of the American slave holder of a few decades ago ~~was~~ -- not however on the number of slaves, but on the number of concubines he owns.

The practice of adoption discussed below gives the one legal ground for polygamy. In case the adopted son is the only son of the father that bore him, he is under obligation to do duty both as the son of his natural father, and also of his adopted father. Both these fathers (and mothers) have a right to enjoy the services of a daughter-in-law, and both, of course have the right to expect grandsons. So the son of two fathers, acting in his dual capacity, takes a wife to be the daughter-in-law of his natural parents, and another for his adopted parents. This is not considered polygamy, as he is acting as two different men.

5. Adoption. Of course it often happens that a man is too poor to experiment with more than one woman, and fails in his first attempt to receive a son. Or it may be that the sons all die before reaching puberty.To meet such a contingency, the system of adoption has been formulated. Thus, if the older brother is sonless, and the younger brother has two sons, it is his duty to give his first born unto his older brother. If the younger brother is without sons, and the elder has more than one, he must give one, but not his oldest, to his

younger brother. In case there is only one son between two brothers, he is adopted by his uncle, but does not alter his relationship to his father. He worships before the tablets of both houses, and raises up children for each as stated above. If there is no son of a brother available for adoption, the next in line is that of a cousin, then of a sister. Very rarely is a son adopted from without the family. If a son is obtained from any source, other than from one's brother, however, a purchase price may be demanded for him. This "adopted or purchased son becomes not only the legal heir, but the spiritual descendant of his putitave father."[1]

Sometimes a young man dies before he is married. Then the girl to whom he is betrothed, in the interests of the future life, submits to a post-mortem marriage, and then adopts a son for her deceased husband.

Superstition has evolved a system of pseudo-adoption. Believing that a child's ill-health is due to the fact that he belongs to an unfortunate family, the anxious parents attempt to deceive the evil spirits into thinking that the child has been really adopted into a more fortunate family. There is a bit of the outer ceremony of adoption as camouflage but the child remains with his own parents and the adoptor assumes no responsibility and claims no rights in regard to the child.

Other evils of the system of ancestor worship will appear in the following discussion of the effects of ancestor worship upon social conditions.

1. Bashford, J. W.: China: An Interpretation.
Abingdon Press, New York, 1916. p. 26.

D. Effect on social conditions.

1. Basis of social life. Writers on things Chinese with one voice declare the central position of ancestor worship in the social structure of China. "It is the rock of Gibraltar in the Chinese religious system," says Pott.[1] "It is the bond of the social order," says Smith.[2] "It molds the social and spiritual life of every individual in the Empire," says Martin.[3] "It is the keystone to the arch of the social structure of China," says another. All their social relationships are organized around the central idea of ancestor worship.

2. Family solidarity. Since this is the case, The family is naturally the most important unit in Chinese society. The individual is in every case subordinate to the family. The marriage relationship is entered into to perpetuate the family in the interests of the dead. For this reason the selection of a wife is the affair, not of the individual, but of the family as a whole. No individual is free to remain unmarried. A duty so important is enforced by the elders of the family.

The unity of the family, however, is not something imposed from without. The worship of comon ancestors, with the common ideals which that implies, common experiences and traditions, and the common belief that a thought contrary to the thought of the family is traitorous, — these common elements tend to weld the family into a spiritual unit, so that the desires of one are likely to coincide with the desires of another,

1. Pott, F.L.Hawks: The Emergency in China. The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, New York, 1913. p. 192.
2. Smith, Arthur: Message of World's Religions. Longman, Green & Co., New York, 1898. p. 57.
3. Martin, W. A. P.: The Lore of Cathay. Fleming H. Revell Co. New York, 1901. p. 268.

and the judgements of one are likely to be seconded by all the others. The suppression of individualism therefore is not so destructive of happiness as it would be in a less unified household.

Family solidarity, however, does not necessarily mean family felicity.The presence of concubines and their children is always a possible source of unhappiness. Legally, the concubines are subject to the wife, and their children belong to her, but whether that is true or not in any particular case depends upon the dispositions of the individuals concerned. Nature is stronger than law, and the wife is at a natural disadvantage, because she was chosen for her husband by his parents, while he chose his own concubines.

3. National solidarity. What is the effect of ancestor worship upon the solidarity of the nation? Is it the cause of what unity there is in China, or is the cause of the great lack of unity so much in evidence? Some would argue for the latter, saying that the loyalty had been so exclusively to the family that any outside the clan were accounted as strangers and enemies, rendering a national solidarity impossible. Most writers, however, take the other view. In Japan, there can be no doubt. "It is not difficult, even for Europeans, to understand how strong is the foundation both for national and dynastic loyalty which such a faith affords. It insures that the whole Japanese people, from the highest to the lowest, shall ever bear in mind the existence and the strength of the innumerable ties which knit the present to the past. It is at once a safeguard against violent revolution, and a guarantee of gradual progress. It is a conception which we cannot perhaps

grasp in its fullness, but we can readily acknowledge its nobility, and its simplicity, and we can feel how great and precious a factor it may be in molding the hearts and the minds of the nations."[1] Arthur Smith and others think that the same is true, in a less marked degree perhaps, in China. "It is perhaps the most potent of many causes which have perpetuated the Chinese race as a unit throughout all the milleniums of its vast history."[2] It is "the root of all Chinese institutions, the bulwark of her government, the strong chain which has bound the people together in a nation."[3] "Reverence for paternal authority, reaching upward, has caused national respect for the head of the nation as father of the people."[4] There is no doubt that the Emperor was regarded in a paternal relation, and the literature of the country seeks to keep the thought constantly before the people that their relationship to the ruler is a filial one. There is good reason for believing, then, that what unity there is has been in the nation throughout her history is due in great part to ancestor worship.

4. Interference with justice. Ancestor worship has oft times interfered with the course of justice. If the criminal is the eldest son, and if one of his parents has recently died, an ancestor-worshipping judge will be very lenient with him, lest by his punishment he might be prevented from sacrificing to the dead. The English judges in Hongkong are familiar with

1. Hastings Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics. I, 432.
2. Smith, Arthur: Message of the World's Religions. Longman, Green & Co. New York, 1898. p. 57.
3. Dwight, Tupper and Bliss: Encyclopedia of Missions. Funk & Wagnalls Co. New York & London. 1924. p. 40
4. Ibid. p. 41.

pleas for pardon on this ground, which, in the obtuseness of their filial piety, they do not respect.

5. Arrests progress. Ancestor worship is the most evident cause of that conservatism, which, like a dead hand has so long held China in its grip. "Generations of today are chained to generations of the past;"[1] so that any departure from the practices of the past is treason. Any advocate of change is a blasphemer. Throughout the centuries China has prostrated herself mentally as well as bodily before her ancestors[2], suffering without knowing it the "most galling subjection to countless thousands of the dead."[3]

6. Reduces the nations to poverty. Lastly, ancestor worship is directly or indirectly responsible for a large part of the poverty which holds the masses of the Chinese people in its thralldom. One of the leading causes of that poverty is overpopulation which is directly due to the worship of ancestors. The desire to have sons to worship before the tablets and at the graves, leads men to an uncontrollable gratification of passions in the propagation of numerous children for whose support he has no means. The practice of concubinage multiplies the number. And so, in spite of infant mortality, China finds herslf today confronted with a vast population, far out of proportion to her developed resources.

Another cause for poverty directly due to ancestor worship is found in the practices connected with funeral rites.

1. Smith, Arthur: Chinese Characteristics. Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co.Ltd. London, 1892.p.212.
2. Pott, F. L. Hawks, The Emergency in China. The Domestic & Foreign Missionary Society, New York, 1913. p. 194.
3. Smith, Arthus: as above, p. 212.

So anxious is the filial son to give his parents an elaborate funeral, that he often sells all he has in order to do so. Many a man is struggling under the weight of an immense debt contracted in the burial of his own parents, in addition to an inherited one for the burial of his grandparents.

Such funeral extravagance is a distinct loss to the country. One has only to note the numerous shops engaged exclusively in the sale and manufacture of "spirit money" and other articles burned at funerals, and to note the evident prosperity of the business, to realize how widespread the evil is. The host of men employed in this business are like parasites, for they contribute nothing to the wealth of the nation. The product of their labors is to be burned, and society is not profited thereby. So also are the priests, who receive large sums for their services, and the geomancers who make their employers poor by the amounts charged for locating a grave-site. This parasitic population must be and is supported by the credulous whose filial piety impels them to sell all their goods to buy these useless articles and to employ the useless services of artful men. Williams says that ten thousand dollars is often spent on a single funeral![1]

In view of these facts, we can begin to appreciate Arthur Smith's conviction that "This system of ancestor worship when rightly understood in its true significance, is one of the heaviest yokes which ever a people was compelled to bear".[2] It is endurable only because those who bear it are unconscious of its injustice.

1. Williams, S. W.: The Middle Kingdom. Chas Scribner'S Sons, New York, 1924. II, 249.
2. Smith, Arthur: Chinese Characteristics. Kegan,Paul,Trench & Co.,London, 1892. p.212.

CHAPTER V.

ANCESTOR WORSHIP AND CHRISTIANITY.

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ANCESTOR WORSHIP AND CHRISTIANITY.

A. Introductory.

1. Ancestor worship as a foe.

The conflict between ancestor worship and other religions is no new thing in China. Buddhism met it upon her arrival in the first century, and finding it a formidable foe, she accepted it and adapted it, and as a result she has lived and flourished and holds her place among the three great religions of China. But in doing so she has almost lost her identity as far as her original nature is concerned. When Mohammedanism arrived in the seventh century, she found herself confronted by the same indomitable foe. In her strong monotheism, she suffered no compromise, and as a result has remained a negligible influence in Chinese life. Nearly a millenium passed and ancestor worship was as virile as ever to oppose herself to Christianity then finding its way into China in the persons of the Jesuits. Still with force unabated, she set herself against Protestantism in the nineteenth century, and the struggle continues.

> "It is a conflict between an uncompromising faith on the one side with an equally uncompromising faith, in its ethical phase, on the other."[1]

There seems to have been no conflict between ancestor worship and Nestorian Christianity, which found its way into China in the early centuries. What the attitude of the Nestorians toward the practice was is not known. The favor with which they were received at court and among the

1. Twitchell, H: Chinese Life in Town and Country, (Adapted from the French of Amile Bord). Putnam's Sons. N.Y. 1905. p.82.

people leads us to suspect that they were not antagonistic toward it.

It is the truth in ancestor worship which makes her such a solid barrier against other faiths. It is the superstition in it which sets Christianity so firmly against it. It is founded on the best and most natural instincts of the human heart, love and respect for the parents.

> "The people feel a shock of pain and revulsion on learning that Christians do not worship their deceased parents."[1]

We must therefore approach the subject sympathetically in our attempt to discover what the attitude and the course of Christianity should be in the matter.

2. Is ancestor worship idolatrous? The whole controversy rests upon the question of the degree of idolatry in ancestor worship . Opinion on this subject is much divided, both as among foreign missionaries and among Chinese Christians. I think no fair mainded writer or speaker holds that there are no idolatrous elements in ancestor worship, but the contention of some is that these elements are not inherent in it and could be eradicated, while the good and beautiful could be retained. One advocate for the adaptation of the rites even admits that "ancestor worship is nine-tenths idolatry and an error fromtop to bottom,"[2] but he contends that the one-tenth should be salvaged. "It's tendency is always polytheistic;" says Mr. Farnell, "a strong monotheism must always be its antagonist."[3]. Moule, after an extended comparison of Chinese ancestor worship with that in other lands, both ancient and modern, remarks that such a comparison

1. Encyclopedia of Missions, p. 41.
2. Moule, V A E:New China and Old,Seeley & Co.London,1891.p.204.
3. Hibbert Journal. Jan. 1909. p. 427.

"seems to stamp it with deep marks of idolatry and superstition, if not with still worse characteristics."[1]

On the other hand, we have the opinions of other just as able men to the effect that ancestor worship is not idolatrous.

> "There is something noble and beautiful in ancestor worship," says Dr. Adkins. "The essence of it is filial piety, which is a part of the Decalogue; and let it not therefore be called idolatry and superstition pure and simple." [2]

A Chinese mandarin, not a Christian, is quoted as saying:

> "Ancestor worship is not idolatrous. It implies merely a reverential and affectionate rite in memory of the departed."[3]

And even Timothy Richards regarded the ancestral tablet as no different from a photograph of one's parents. To be consistent, he says, the missionary who would burn the ancestral tablet must by the same act burn the pictures of his own parents and friends.

B. The history of the conflict.

1. The Jesuit controversy. Such then is the question that has engaged the minds of the Christian church for nearly three hundred years. The historic controversy between the Jesuits on the one side and the Dominicans and Franciscans on the other, which lasted over one hundred years, is very interesting in the light of the Protestant revival of the same question. Father Matteo Ricci, one of the first Jesuit missionaries to China, "was convinced that these rites had no religious significance either in their institution or in their practice by the enlightened classes."[4] He allowed Christians

1. Moule, as above. p.214.
2. Ibid, 205.
3. Ibid, 195.
4. Catholic Encyclopedia, XIII, 37.

to continue the practice, "avoiding everything suggestive of superstition, and he gave them rules to discriminate."[1] Ricci died in 1610 leaving to his successors the well established practice of ancestor worship within the churches. The Spanish Dominicans and Franciscans, after their arrival in 1631, unanimously condemned the rites, and sent a denunciation of them to the Bishops of the Philippines, who after a few years of debate referred the matter to Pope Urban VIII (1635). The debate continued until 1645, when Pope Innocent X declared the ceremonies illicit. Whereupon the Jesuits despatched Father Martini to Rome to give a correct statement of the position of the defenders of the rites. After hearing his defense of the Jesuit position, Pope Alexander VII issued a Bull sanctioning the practice of ancestor worship, saying that it seemed to be a purely civil and political cult (1658). In 1669 Pope Clement IX decided that the decrees of 1645 and 1658 both held good, but that the application must be regulated according to specific circumstances. Meanwhile, in 1668, a wave of persecution sent the missionaries all to Canton. By this circustance, nineteen Jesuits, two Dominicans, and one Franciscan found themselves thrust together. They took advantage of the occasion to hold a conference on this and other matters. After forty days of discussion the following conclusion was reached:

> "As to the ceremonies by which Chinese honor Confucius and the dead, the replies of the Sacred Congregation of the Inquisition, approved by our Holy Father Alexander VII in 1658, must be followed absolutely, because they are based upon a very probable opinion to which it is impossible to offset any evidence to the contrary, and, this probability assumed, the door of salvation must not be closed to the innumerable Chinese who would stray from

1. Ibid, 38. (Catholic Encyclopedia)

> the Christian religion if they were forbidden to do what they might do licitly and in good faith and which they cannot forego without serious injury."[1]

By 1697 all Augustinians, nearly all Franciscans, and some Dominicans, had been converted to the practices of the Jesuits. The Chinese emperor K'ang-hsi declared that the rites were not idolatrous and ordered all missionaries to apply to him for a permit to preach Christianity. Such a permit would be granted only to those who would promise to tolerate ancestor worship. So the struggle continued until finally, 1742, Pope Benedict XIV "declared after scrupulous investigation that the ceremonies in honor of Confucius and of ancestors and deceased relatives are tainted with superstition to such a degree that they cannot be purified."[2] He therefore issued a Bull prescribing an oath for all missionaries in China, prohibiting the rites without qualification.

2. The Protestant parley. The Protestant discussions have not been so sensational as were their forerunners of the previous century. So information regarding this later phase of the struggle is not so easily obtained. The question has been discussed, however, in every missionary conference since 1877. In that conference, if there was any marked opinion in favor of ancestor worship; it did not receive full expression. The feeling expressed was quite unanimous for an uncompromising attitude toward the rites. Three years later, however, the policy of allowing the worship of ancestors was advocated by four able missionaries, Drs. Martin, Edkins, Williamson, and the Rev. Mr. Reid. These men did not

1. Catholic Encyclopedia. XIII, 38.
2. Ibid, 39.

advocate idolatry. They held that the rites of prostration did not necessarily imply divine worship, and that an uncompromising attitude on the part of the church was the greatest bar to the conversion of the literary classes to Christianity. "Is there no 'via media,'" asked Dr. Williamson, "by which, steering between idolatry and reverence we may provide a Christian rite which shall retain the good and purge out the evil of this system?"[1]

The traditional policy was strictly upheld by Dr. Ernst Faber and Mr. Muirhead, Hudson Taylor, and others, all men of wide experience and long service. They were thoroughly convinced of the idolatry involved in ancestor worship and they enumerated besides ten evils growing out of it.[2] Among other things Dr. Faber said:

> "Many wise men have advised against too rigid rejection of ancestor worship, which may after all be nearly akin to filial respect. But the attitude of Christianity to this form of worship can easily be determined when its true character is understood..... It is not merely commemorative, but it is pretended intercourse with a world of spirits; it has developed a supreme view of paternal authority, placing it above the authority of God."[2]

Dr. Faber thoroughly approved of the decision of the Pope of 1742 and said that had it turned out differently, Christianity would have become little more than a form of Confucianism.[3]

We move on now to the conference of 1907. Here we find almost no objection to the liberal views which seventeen years before had been called semi-heathen. Thus we see there has been a gradual movement back toward the position of the Jesuits.

1. Moule, A E: New China and Old, Seeley and Co. London 1891. p. 204.
2. Encyclopedia of Missions, p. 41.
3. "Missionary Review of the World" Feb.1908. p.139.

At the conclusion of the debate in this conference, four resolutions were adopted "which may justly be viewed as a summary of present-day Protestant opinion."[1] They are as follows:

> I. That while worship of ancestors is incompatible with an enlightened and spiritual conception of Christian faith, and so cannot be tolerated as a practice in the Christian church, yet we should be careful to encourage in our Christian converts the feeling for reverence for the memory of the departed which this custom seeks to express, and to impress upon the Chinese in general the fact that Christians attach great importance to filial piety.
> II. ....The Conference recommends that greater prominence be given in preaching, in teaching, and in religious observances to the practical duty of reverence to parents.....
> III. Recognizing that in replacing the worship of ancestors in China by Christianity, many delicate and difficult problems inevitably arise, we would emphasize the necessity for the continuous education of the conscience of the members of the Christian church by whom all such questions must ultimately be adjusted, expressing our confidence that, through the leading and illumination of the Spirit of God, the Church will be guided into right lines of action.
> IV. That this conference recommends our Chinese brethren to encourage an affectionate remembrance of the dead by beautifying graves and erecting useful memorials to parents and ancestors, by building or endowing churches, schools, hospitals, asylums, and other charitable institutions as is common in all Christian lands, thus making memorials of the departed a means of helping the living through successive generations."[2].

C. The present problem.

1. A live question today.

Though the Conference of 1922 allowed the matter to rest, the question has by no means been solved. Although "It is impossible for Christainity to tolerate ancestor worship — almost as impossible as it is for a Chinaman to renounce it,"[3] yet it is becoming more and more

1. Addison, J T: Chinese Ancestor Worship, Chung Hua Sheng Kung Hui, 1925. p. 77.
2. Addison, ob.cit., p. 77.
3. Degroot, J J M: The Rel of the Chinese, Macmillan & Co N.Y. 1910. p. 84.

urgent that a "via media" be found by which the good in it can be conserved. And as the Chinese church is becoming more indigenous, and Christian Chinese minds are grappling with the problem, it may be that wey are nearer a solution today than the actual achievements to date indicate.

2. Results of the policy of rejection.

It may help us, in the midst of all this conflicting evidence, to pause for a moment and see what the situation is after all these decades of strict rejection of ancestor worship.For, in spite of the discussions on the subject, the policy of Protestantism has been quite consistent and practically unanimous in its attempt to abolish all ancestral rites among Christians. It cannot be denied thaty, in spite of that policy, the growth of Protestantism has been phenomenal. At the end of the first quarter of a century of Protestant enterprise, the number of converts could be counted on the fingers. At the close of the first century (1907) there were 69,000 Protestant Christians in China, and in fifteen years thereafter the number increased to 139,000. So let it not be said that ancestor worship is an entirely unsurmountable barrier to the spread of Christianity.

The question arises, however, as to how far Chinese Christians have actually dropped the practice of ancestor worship. It would appear from some statements that very few of them do.[1] Mr. C. T. Woo, a Christian writer in "Truth," a Chinese magazine, says,

> "Since my baptism in 1913, I have been making periodical offerings to my ancestors as usual, and the church has not yet shown any signs of interference. Therefore an-

1. Degroot,JJM:The Rel of the Chinese,Macmillan & Co. N.Y. 1910. p. 85.

> cestor worship has become no problem to me. Many who are contemplating becoming Christians have come to me to ask about this same question, but my answer is always this: you can become a Christian, and you can also make periodic offerings to your ancestors."[1]

Mr. Woo goes on to say that the practice is so general among his relatives, friends, and acquaintances that he was surprised recently to learn that ancestor worship is still the main issue in anti-Christian movements.

On the other hand, evidence is brought forward to show the undesirable results in cases where ancestor worship has been given up. It appears that, to some at least, ancestor worship is so much an integral parts of the moral nature of the Chinese that the discontinuance of the one mean the weakening, if not the complete overthrow, of the other. To them renouncing ancestor worship means renouncing filial piety. It therefore leads to revolt against paternal and patriarchal authority , which is the cement of social life, and the foundation of morality, ethics, and politics. One or two instances serve to illustrate the extent of this revolt. A father wrote to his son at school admonishing him for misconduct. The son replied:

> "I am an individual, so are you. As two individuals, our opinions are worthy of equal consideration, and I see no reason why I should forego my opinion in favor of yours."[2]

Another young man at school wrote to his father for money, addressing him as "My dear brother." In defense of this mode of address he said, "Before God all men are equal. We are all his children, you as well as I. Why, therefore,

1. "The West China Missionary News," Dec. 1925. Translated and reprinted from "Truth."
2. Patt, L F H:The Emergency in China, Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, N.Y. 1913. p. 194.
3. West China Miss. News, Dec. 1925.

should I call you 'Father,' thus implying your superiority?" The father, in this instance, accepted the title, addressed his son as"brother" and refused to send the money asked for, stating that, as a brother, he assumed no responsibility in the matter of the other's education.

It is argued by the opponents of Christianity that "all who are converted are going rapidly to degeneration. Discontinuance of ancestor worship is but a step in the general degeneration of the convert." This statement certainly cannot be allowed in the light of the facts. The strong Christian characters of our generation in China disprove any such argument. It may be admitted, however, that in our strict rejection of all the rites we have probably torn out much wheat with the tares. Like Hsih Huang Ti, in our eagerness to destroy all traces of the old, we have burned the good with the bad.

Those who would, in the interest of consistency, reject even photographs of one's parents, are but adding fuel to the flame. One of the most bitter taunts of opponents is that "Christians have no ancestors," that they "do not love their parents." It becomes incumbent upon us, then, to prove that we do love our parents, and that we do honor our ancestors.

D. <u>The solution</u>.

1. How the early church met the problem.

Christianity is not now having her first encounter with ancestor worship. At the very beginning of her existence the church met the problem in Rome. The Romans were ancestor worshippers. They became Christians. Some adjustment became necessary. Perhaps from that early experience, which was not of

course an exact parallel of the present situation, we can glean a few facts for our guidance and perhaps also for our warning.

The case was quite comparable to the Jesuit controversy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when the Chinese emperor was willing to tolerate and give official backing to Christianity if they would accept the rites of ancestor worship. In the case of the early church, The Roman Emperor Hadrian was willing to tolerate it upon the same conditions, viz., that Christians would perform "the Roman ceremonies and worship the Emperor's genius." The decision of the Christians was far reaching in its results.

> "The whole future of Christianity was bound up with this refusal to let new wine be poured into worn out skins. Had the church complied with this 'moderate and reasonable' request, as the Emperor esteemed it, the Empire would still have perished, but the Church would have perished with it." [1]

The early Christians in Rome, however, did not forget their dead. The memory of the departed was celebrated on the anniversary of their death "in a manner suited to the spread of the Christian faith and Christian hope. It was usual on this day to partake of the Holy Communion under a sense of the inseparable fellowship of those who had died in the Lord."[2] This practice led to prayer for the dead, and being baptized for the dead,[3] practices in themselves in harmony with love. They led further, however, to prayers to the dead, and praises to them together with Christ.

There is a very beautiful inscription on what is said

1. "Missionary Review of the World." 1908. p. 39.
2. Moule, A E: New China and Old, Seeley & Co. Ltd. London 1891. p. 212.
3. I Cor. 15 29f.

to be the tomb of St. Paul, which may indicate the attempt then made at adjustment. At any rate, it suggests a line which might be followed to advantage in the present situation in China. The words are as follows:

> "Near to the place of death his body lies
> Buried by us. Oft round the blessed grave
> (If so the persecutor's wrath permit)
> We mean to gather when the shadows fall,
> Or noontime stillness consecrates the field,
> To sing our praises — not to the dear dead,
> Though venerable — but rather to His Name
> Who is our life and Victory."[1]

2. Viewed from the Chinese standpoint.

Sometimes it happens that our enemies give us the truest picture of ourselves. If we can "see ourselves as others see us" in the matter under discussion, we may be helped to a solution of the difficulty.. First, the objection of Christians from the West to Chinese ancestor worship appears inconsistent with the worship of the saints as practiced in Catholicism. They accuse us of being guilty of ancestor worship in the same sense that they are when we reverence our great men as we have done in Westminster Abbey. These accusations are, of course, on the plea that ancestor worship is not worship in any sense of the word.

A second and more serious accusation is that Christians of the West disrespect and dishonor not only their own dead ancestors, but their living parents. The truth in this accusation makes the pill all the more bitter. We would do well to pause and ask ourselves how much of the disrespect for parental authority and the general crime which has followed in its wake, could have been avoided had we been a

1. Moule, op.cit., p. 222.

a little more worshipful in our attitude toward our ancestors. It may be as someone has said, "The American people have yet to learn ancestor worship." It would indeed be a sad thing if, at our instigation, the Chinese should cast off the observance now so sacred to her, and as a result, find herself in a few years even as we are now.

3. The answer. To the first of these accusations there can be but one answer. We must make it clear that the Christian conscience is not opposed to rites of mere commemoration, and that the church is as willing to allow the Chinese to honor their ancestors as she is to grant the privilege to other people. The fact that their ancestors are non-Chrsitian should form no barrier against that. To the second question likewise there can be but one answer. We must show ourselves as eager as the best of them to nourish and maintain filial piety with all that the term implies of love and reverence of living parents, and affectionate memory of the departed. But how this is to be done becomes the question!

4. Some attempts as solution. The question of ancestor worship is one that has had to be met by every family or individual in China who has become Christian. Every one has been compelled to take some stand on the subject. As we have seen, some have strictly rejected all rites and ceremonies connected with it, while others have continued the forms, claiming that they are not idolatrous. There is also an attempt on the part of many to substitute other rites by which they hope to preserve the element of filial piety with its ethical and moral significance, while rendering worship to God alone. A very beautiful custom, practiced by

one family is as follows: On Easterday all the members of the family take a picnic lunch and go to the cemetary, very much in the fashion of non-Christians at the Spring Festival. There, around the garve, the virtues of the departed are recited by the oldest member present, and the younger members are urged to imitate those virtues. At all times of the year the daughter makes it her practice to go to the tomb to pray, not to the spirit, but to God. She feels the peculiar nearness of her mother's spirit and is thereby drawn closer to God. The grave is kept clean, flowers are planted thereon, and the outward show of respect equals in every way that of the most ardent ancestor worshipper. Furthermore, a biography of the departed is prepared to pass on to succeeding generations, that her memory be not lost and that her virtues may continue to inspire nobility in the hearts of children's children.

At a general conference of the Missions and Churches of West China held in January 1924, a commission was appointed to study the question of ancestor worship and to formulate a ritual consistent with Christian principles for use in churches and in families in showing honor to the dead. That committee has not yet reported. The China National Christian Council has set aside Easter 1926 as a day for special services of commemoration in the churches and in private families, and also as a day in which special marks of respect shall be shown to living parents. We await with interest the outcome of these measures.

5. The Ultimate Solution. The final solution of the question of ancestor worship rests with the Chinese Chris-

tians themselves. Indeed, we might even say that the Chinese people, even non-Christians, will settle it. It is unthinkable that idolatrous rites before ancestors can long persist against the advance of science and other branches of Western thought. At any rate we believe that Christian principles are firmly enough rooted in the Chinese church to guarantee that she will never suffer a compromise which will make the Christian church in China idolatrous.

COMPREHENSIVE SUMMARY

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Chapter I. Religious life in China is like a piece of her own tapestry — many colors blending into one harmonious whole. With ancestor worship as a groundwork, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, animism, and all superstition are the figures woven into it so skilfully that the observer is conscious only of the total effect. It is a unity. Confucian ethics, Buddhist spirituality, Taoist magic are component parts of that unity of which ancestor worship is the heart throb.

Chapter II. Ancestor worship of today as held by the masses is probably not very different from that practiced in all the past ages, but it is somewhat lower than the ideal of the Classics. There we learn that the dead are actually present at feasts, that they have power to help or to harm their descendants, and that it is the highest duty of sons to supply the needs of the spirits. Just how far the ancestors were regarded as deities is not clear. There are glimpses of high meanings in the rites which preclude any thought of idolatry, and there are other statements that lead directly to the opposite conclusion.

As practiced today there is, no doubt, a great deal of difference of meaning in the minds of the people. To some the ancestors are gods; to others, patron saints; to others still, hostile beings; and to yet others they are human beings like ourselves transported to another region. Among them, therefore, a variety of motives for worship are inevitable. Filial piety is the most universal motive. Fear and self interests also play a part.

Chapter III. The various funeral rites are performed for the ben-

efit of one or the other of the three souls of the departed, Even mourning is probably a phase of ancestor worship. Daily worship before the tablet, occasional worship in the temple, and semi-annual worship at the tomb, is the prescribed program for the worship of the departed.

Chapter IV. There are some qualities of ancestor worship which are deserving and should be preserved. A true filial piety is an admirable quality and should not be allowed to become lost. The general morality of the Chinese nation is due in large measure to ancestor worship; If this prop of morality is removed, care must be exercised to see that another and stronger prop takes its place, else morality will totter and fall. But along with these good qualities go many that are undesirable and irreconcilable with Christianity. Among these we name revenge, polygamy, and concubinage. Dire poverty and extreme conservatism — two of the problems of China today — are due in large degree to ancestor worship.

Chapter V. Ancestor worship has successfully withstood the inroads of its rivals throughout the centuries. Buddhism, Mohammedanism, and Christianity have each had to reckon with it. Buddhism accepted it. Mohammedanism did not. Christianity has not, although although those have not been lacking who advocate its adoption in a modified form. It is recognized by all that, as practiced, there are idolatrous elements in ancestor worship which must be eliminated in any form which Christianity could approve. The difference of opinion lies in the relation of these elements to ancestor worship itself. Is idolatry inherent in the system, or is it a sort of rider,

which could be shed without doing violence to the system itself? This is the question which was debated for a century by Catholic Missionaries, and which has been discussed by Protestants in recent decades. Some attempts are now being made to adapt ancestral rites to Christian practice with the aim of conserving the good elements contained therein, and avoiding those which are incompatible with Christian ideals and practices. This is, however, a task for the Chinese church itself. The missionary's part is to give them sympathetic understanding and encouragement.

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